

THE ASSESSMENT OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING: A CASE STUDY OF THE  
DIVISION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN, MINISTRY OF  
AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY IN LAO PDR

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

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Gender mainstreaming to promote gender equality and include persons with disabilities is important because it can bring a huge impact to the organization and the country. It is not easy to accomplish gender equality as long as there are barriers against women's participation in all spheres. As a result, achieving gender equality is a challenge for not only developed countries but also developing countries. This thesis evaluates the implementation of gender mainstreaming to promote gender equality and the inclusion of persons with disabilities of the Division for the Advancement of Women in Lao PDR. This thesis discovers the perception of gender equality, the barriers that prevent women from achieving gender equality, and the impact of gender equality and lastly examines whether the inclusive approach to include persons with disabilities is implemented in the ministerial organization.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
<b>I. INTRODUCTION: OVERVIEW OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN LAO PDR.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Background of the Study Area.....	1
Institutional and Legal Context for the Promotion for Gender Equality in Lao PDR.....	3
The Lao Women’s Union (LWU).....	3
The Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women (LNCAW) .....	4
Division for Advancement of Women, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry .....	6
Disability Community in Laos .....	8
Purpose of This Study .....	15
<b>II. EVALUATING INCLUSIVENESS IN GENDER EQUALITY AND ACCESS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES .....</b>	<b>19</b>
Gender Mainstreaming Strategy .....	19
Meaning of Gender Equality.....	22
Women’s Barriers to Achieve Equality .....	24
Impact of Gender Equality .....	27
Inclusion Approach in Gender Mainstreaming Program .....	30
CIPP Evaluation Model as the Approach to Evaluating a Program .....	33
<b>III. METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>IV. RESULTS .....</b>	<b>41</b>
Perception of Gender Equality.....	44
Physical Performance.....	44
Intelligence.....	44

Chapter	Page
Family .....	45
Workplace .....	45
Agency .....	45
The Impact of Gender Equality.....	46
Gender Equality and the Development of the Country.....	46
Gender Equality and Women’s Opportunities .....	47
Women’s Barriers to Achieve Gender Equality .....	49
Women and Traditional Practices .....	50
Family Traditional Practice.....	50
Lao Women’s Personalities .....	50
Women and Hierarchy System .....	51
Inclusion Approach in Implementing Gender Mainstreaming Program.....	52
V. DISCUSSION .....	53
CIPP Evaluation Model .....	53
Context .....	53
Inputs .....	55
Process .....	56
Product .....	58
VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	60
APPENDIX: ABBREVIATIONS .....	64
REFERENCES CITED.....	65



## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Staff recruitment for Agriculture and Forestry Sector from 2008-2010.....	59

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION: OVERVIEW OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN LAO PDR**

#### **Background of the Study Area**

In Laos, gender mainstreaming is an essential tool to disseminate gender equality. In reality, to achieve gender equality, women have to encounter numerous barriers and have to bear with persistent stereotypes. To address these issues, organizations concerning the advancement of women have been set up. For instance, the Lao Women's Union and the Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women have been established to promote gender equality in Laos. However, simply disseminating gender mainstreaming strategies is not sufficient because it also requires mutual understanding of men and women on how gender equality plays a role in society. In addition, the participation of persons with disability needs attention because official policy does not specifically mention the rights of persons with disability. Even though there is a start to use inclusion approach in the national strategy and action plan on inclusive education 2011-2015 which addresses the inclusion of person with disabilities in education sector, it seems that other sectors have not even mentioned this idea yet (Ministry of Education and Sport, 2011). Therefore, this thesis will assess one of the gender focal points of the Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women, namely the Division for the Advancement of Women, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, about how this organization promotes gender equality as well as the inclusion of persons with disability, and explore how gender mainstreaming policy in the ministry level is translated by concerned government officials.

The structure of this thesis is as follows: **Chapter I** will introduce the various organizations working on promoting gender mainstreaming as well as the organizations working on supporting persons with disabilities. **Chapter II** will explore how other literature views gender mainstreaming, how gender equality is defined, women's barriers to achieve gender equality, and the impact of gender equality. Furthermore, it also discusses the inclusive approach in gender mainstreaming programs and introduces the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, and Product) evaluation model. **Chapter III** will explain about the method used to collect insightful data, and how interviews with eleven national and local government officials were conducted. **Chapter IV** will discuss the findings from my field work which was aimed to (1) Find out how Lao staff who attended the gender mainstreaming program at the ministry level understand the meaning of gender equality; (2) Examine how gender equality affects the development of the country; (3) Find out the barriers that prevent women from attending the gender mainstreaming program; and (4) Explore whether or not an inclusive approach to integrate people with disability into policy and implementation of gender mainstreaming program is applied and implemented it in the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. **Chapter V** will be about the analysis of the results which will be based on CIPP Evaluation Model. By using this framework, the results from the evaluation will be useful for the Division for the Advancement of Women to explore the strengths, weaknesses and areas of improvement for the organization in order to be more effective in promoting gender equality. Finally, **Chapter VI** will present conclusions based on my findings and analysis and propose some recommendations for the Division for the Advancement of Women for further improvement.

### *Institutional and Legal Context for the Promotion for Gender Equality in Lao PDR*

Laos, one of the least developed countries based on its low income, limited human resources and economic vulnerability (United Nations Development Programme, 2007), is located in South East Asia and has a population of over 6 million. The legal framework to support gender equality and women's empowerment is embedded in the 1991 Constitution and in a number of national laws. New legislation entitled the Law on the Development and Protection of Women and passed by the National Assembly in October 2004, also included provisions on domestic violence and trafficking in women and children. However, there are gaps in the enforcement of these laws. In a number of areas, women do not enjoy the full benefit of equality under national laws because of traditional practices such as early marriage, social pressure against women seeking divorce, inheritance practices of some ethnic groups that favor men, and women's lack of awareness of their legal rights (Asian Development Bank, 2001). For these reasons, internal agencies as well as a large number of external agencies and international nongovernmental organizations continue to support projects targeting women and girls and increasingly incorporate gender analysis and gender equality goals in their general development assistance programs. Their equal participation in economic, social, and political life is supported by the 1991 Constitution and various national laws and policies (Asian Development Bank, 2001). There are two major organizations working on promoting gender equality, namely the Lao Women's Union and the Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women.

#### *The Lao Women's Union (LWU)*

The Lao Women's Union, one of four independent organizations authorized in the 1991 Constitution, continues to support Lao women's development as well as

political mobilization through a network that extends to the village level. Its mandate is to represent Lao women of all ethnic groups and to protect “women’s rights and interests.” Its main responsibility is to improve the living conditions and status of Lao women. The number of LWU women members had risen to 970,650 by the end of 2005, approximately half of all eligible women. This organization is led by the Lao People’s Revolutionary Party. At the core of activities of LWU in advocacy for gender equality lies the Gender Resource Information and Development Project (GRID) a capacity-building project of the LWU supported by the World Bank and engaged in a wide range of activities aiming at strengthening skills and competencies on gender mainstreaming for various target groups within the central and provincial government bodies. Examples of activities include: gender awareness and gender analysis for Government Officials; training of a pool of gender trainers and researchers at the central and provincial levels; training materials; research and gender analysis on a variety of topics, and dissemination through its five libraries/resource centers, at the Central Library of Laos and National University of Laos (Asian Development Bank, 2001).

*The Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women (LNCAW)*

The second organization is the recently established Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women (LNCAW). This organization works directly under the leadership of the government. This high-level body is mandated to develop and coordinate implementation of a national policy and action plan for women’s advancement (Asian Development Bank, 2001). Lao Women’s Union (LWU) and the Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women (LNCAW) are both working on inserting gender mainstreaming policies at the local and central levels in Laos in order to promote gender equality and allow women to have more ability to

participate in political and socio-economic resources. According to their mandates, LWU focuses on socio-economic development at the local grassroots level to improve the living conditions of women and families, whereas LNCAW focuses on assisting the government in formulating national policy guidance and strategic plans of action to promote women's advancement and gender equality in all spheres and at all levels of society.

LNCAW was established in 2002 and has a high leadership profile at the national, provincial, district and village levels. To promote gender equality, LNCAW has been implementing five main programs as following:

1. Improve women's participation in implementation of National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy (NGPES);
2. Promote opportunities for women and girls to be equal with men and boys in education and other fields;
3. Improve health care services for women;
4. Increase the number of women in leading positions at all levels;
5. Strengthen the capacity of national organizations concerned with protection of women and promotion of their advancement.

The roles and tasks of the Lao NCAW are as follow:

1. To assist the Government in formulating national policy guidance and strategic plans of action to promote women's advancement and gender equality in all spheres and at all levels of society;
2. To act as the Focal Point and coordinate closely with local authorities and international organizations' concerns for the implementation of the party and Government policy, the promotion of gender equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. Lao NCAW oversees planning to

establish a gender focal point in each ministry to promote the advancement of women in each sector. The following are examples of such initiatives at the ministerial levels:

- High-level gender working groups are collecting sex disaggregated data relevant to poverty reduction and use of the data to develop gender profiles or assessments of their sectors;
- Capacity building on gender mainstreaming of staff;
- Maintain gender and ethnic balance of staff at all levels;
- Improved consultative process with women at local level for poverty reduction projects and increasing participation in project activities, including extension services and training.

*Division for Advancement of Women, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry*

In addition to the gender strategies from LNCAW, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry also has its own strategies for promoting the Advancement of Women, which are anchored around 3 main points:

- Enhance qualifications, competencies and core skills of women of advance women in Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) workforce at all levels;
- Increase rural women's access to productive activities and benefits from them;
- Increase number of female staff in the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry also has developed its own strategy for advancement of women by interpreting the National Strategy for Advancement of Women 2011-2015. The overall objectives of the 2011-2015 strategy are to create all

necessary conditions for promotion of women's advancement, to develop women's knowledge and ability to implement gender equality step by step (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2012). There are three programs included in the strategy for Advancement of Women:

1. Program 1: Increase active participant of women in implementation of Development Strategy for Development of Agriculture and Forestry Sector to help achieve 4 targets, 8 programs and 14 measures.
2. Program 2: Build capacity for implementation of women's advancement at each level to increase number of women in decision making at different level.
3. Program 3: Coordinate and cooperate with international community.

At the national level, the MAF Policy on the Advancement of Women in Agriculture and Forestry is promoted and catalyzed by the Division for the Advancement of Women which is the specialist unit in charge of providing advice and technical backstopping to the MAF and its related institutions. It is directed and supervised by one of the Deputy Director-Generals of Permanent Secretary's Office, which is located in the Cabinet Office of MAF. At the provincial and district levels, similar structures of specialist units are established and qualified personnel are appointed to advance women into Provincial/District Agricultural and Forestry Office (PAFO/DAFO) institutions and programs. Ideally, these specialist units are positioned in the area of bureaucracy where an overall coordination and planning can be carried out effectively and where wide-reaching influence upon various units in PAFO/DAFO is possible, such as the office of PAFO Directors or Planning Units.



The main functions of these specialist units are as follows:

1. At their respective level, national, provincial or district, these specialist units are responsible for provision of appropriate and timely advice and technical backstopping for their respective clients, namely MAF Departments, divisions and units, and other related institutions (e.g. technical colleges and training centers), and PAFO/DAFO divisions and units. They also monitor and report progress made in the advancement of women in their respective offices;
2. These specialist units are also responsible for the coordination and working of the Networks for the Advancement of Women in Agriculture and Forestry in MAF headquarters and provinces respectively; and
3. With the authority and leadership of the Permanent Secretary's Office, the Gender Division is in charge of collecting, collating and analyzing the Annual Progress Reports for the Advancement of Women submitted by all MAF Departments and all PAFPs. The-Whole-of-MAF Annual Progress Report of the Advancement of Women, compiled and refined by the Division, is submitted to the Vice-Minister who is in charge of headquarter functions.

Gender and disability topics are in many ways parallel in Laos, but there are different organizations working on each issue separately. Below are the overviews of the organizations working on gender and persons with disabilities.

#### *Disability Community in Laos*

Many people with disabilities in Lao PDR, as in most developing countries in the world, live in poverty and have limited opportunities for accessing education, health, and suitable housing and employment opportunities (International Labor Organization, 2009). Under the Constitution of the Lao PDR, 1991, all citizens are equal before the law. Implicit to this, is equality for people with disability. To date,

several decrees concerning disabled people have been issued. These relate to rehabilitation, education, social security, labor, housing and tax. Lao PDR has also ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Proclamation of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons. Each of these instruments promotes the full participation and equality of disabled people in society (“Factsheet 3: Disability in Laos,” n.d.). Lao PDR also works to achieve targets set in the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action and Biwako Plus Five towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and Pacific. Both form regional policy guidelines for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, which has been extended to 2012 (International Labor Organization, 2009).

The CRPD recognizes the social model of disability, stating in its preamble: “that disability is an evolving concept and results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (“Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,” n.d.). Unlike those of many other countries, the Lao legal system lacks a definition of disability. Therefore, there is no established perception or view such as the “medical model” of disability in the legal system. Consequently, there exists an opportunity to reflect a social model of disability in the law, which values rights of persons with disabilities, rather than viewing persons with disabilities as charity cases or as a burden on the State (O’Brien, 2011).

The United Nations Development Programme estimates that 80% of all people with disabilities live in developing countries like Lao PDR, and according to the World Bank, 1 in 5 of the world’s poor is disabled. The incidence of disability in the

Lao PDR is high, attributable to low standards of healthcare, widespread poverty and the high incidence of landmines and unexploded ordnances (UXO's) - the result of 10 years of intensive bombing by the United States of America during the Vietnam War.

There is no centralized statistics system in Lao PDR. This limits the availability of current and reliable information on the number of people with disabilities. The last National Census conducted in 2005 identified 80,000 people with disability in Lao PDR. However, the World Health Organization estimates that 10% of the population is disabled. This figure is increasing due to ongoing UXO explosions, poverty, limited access to healthcare and population growth.

According to the 2005 census, the leading cause of disability is “since birth” which includes congenital conditions (40.3%), followed by “disease” (27.9%), “accident” (15.1%) including motor vehicle/cycle accidents, “war accident” (10.2%), “drugs” (1.2%) and “other” (5.3%). Certain impairments including physical and sensory impairments are well-recognized disabilities. In recent times awareness of mental disorders, intellectual, emotional, developmental and non-visible disabilities in Lao PDR has improved but these conditions are still not widely recognized as disabilities (“The Lao Disabled People’s Association,” n.d).

Positive achievements already done include:

- Disabled people have better access to information.
- Disability rights awareness has been broadly raised among government officials and in society.
- People with disabilities have gained strong support from the government as well as international development programs.
- There is the National Strategy and Action Plan on Inclusive Education 2011-2015 to promote the rights of persons with disabilities.

Some of the barriers that still exist and those are addressed as follow (O'Brien, 2011):

- Poor infrastructure makes it hard for people with disabilities to go out to the community.
- Lao staff who work with people with disabilities still lack experience and skills to accelerate the process of raising standards of administration and management.
- Operating budget needs to be adequate in order for persons with disabilities and their needs to be mainstreamed within society.
- The organizations concerned should develop a greater understanding of the needs of persons with disabilities, the interaction between persons with disabilities and the Government and other relevant issues.
- The challenge now is to develop international channels of communication between the various grass-roots groups in different countries.

Although these barriers are still significant, there are a large number of organizations that are addressing disability issues in Laos, which could be enlisted to raise awareness about the inclusive approach.

#### Lao Disabled People's Association (LDPA)

The LDPA was constituted on 20 July 2001, in Vientiane Capital, Laos. Since the establishment until present time, the LDPA has grown to eleven provincial branch offices, forming 140 cell groups of disabled members. There are currently over 5000 disabled members registered in the organizational database. There are several challenges that LDPA is facing namely: no accurate or precise data collection on disability nationwide; lack of permanent staff at the LDPA because the staff are mainly project-based and funded by foreign sponsors; and there is a big gap in knowledge, awareness and education among disabled members who live in the city and rural area.

### Lao Disabled Women's Development Centre (LDWDC)

The Lao Disabled Women's Development Centre (LDWDC) was established in 1990 and provides disabled women from across Lao PDR with vocational training and personal development opportunities. Disabled women travel to and live in purpose-built facilities at the LDWDC near the Lao-Thai Friendship Bridge in Vientiane Capital where they learn many skills including cooking, sewing, handicrafts, computers, English language and food production. LDWDC trainees then return to their villages where they can generate an income and be self-sufficient. The LDWDC is also an active advocate for the rights of disabled women and equality of opportunity.

LDWDC is focused on health care problems. Knowledge of basic health issues for most people with disabilities in Lao PDR, especially in remote villages, is very poor, and access to health care is difficult and often too expensive for people with disabilities to access. This is why LDWDC decided to provide healthcare and Reiki<sup>1</sup> training to women and communities with disabilities. The primary goal of the project was: (1) to empower the physically disabled people to take an active role in their own health care and to improve their physical and mental health on a long term basis with minimal costs; and (2) to provide disabled people with additional skills that they can utilize to create a suitable source of income for themselves. The healthcare component focused on providing basic training on health issues such as the prevention of diseases, basic hygiene, sexual health, maternal health and sanitation.

### Lao Association of the Deaf (LAD)

The Lao Association of the Deaf (LAD) is emerging out of the Lao Deaf Unit (LDU) within the LDPA. The LAD is housed within the same building as the LDPA

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<sup>1</sup> Reiki Training program is the energy healing course.

in Vientiane Capital. The LDU was established more than 8 years ago to raise awareness of issues affecting deaf people and assist deaf people to fully participate in mainstream society. Like the LDPA, the LAD is a membership-based organization providing services to members based on their needs. These services include sign language and vocational training, advocacy and rights awareness programs.

The Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Unit has said that more funding is needed for making the first Lao sign language dictionary to ensure better communication between either people with hearing and speaking disabilities or non-disabilities people with these people. In addition, the ability for the association to communicate with other persons with disabilities is a major issue within the LDPA. Although some hearing members of staff are employed as sign language translators, very few others can use sign language. This tends to lead to social isolation and exclusion and, as a consequence, their participation in the harmonization of domestic legislation with the CRPD is limited. Lip-reading is not a particularly viable option (O'Brien, 2011).

#### International Development

Other organizations for persons with disabilities working in Laos are: POWER-COPE, World Concern, World Vision, Leprosy Group, Prosthetic and Orthotic Worldwide Education and Relief (UK), Handicap International Belgium, Netherlands Salvation for Leprosy, Save the Children Fund – UK, The Leprosy Mission International, The Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres of Thailand, The Lao Association for Handicapped Women and Children, and Landmine Victims Assistance (International Labor Organization, 2009). International agencies and Non-governmental Organizations' make a significant contribution to improving the situation for people with disabilities in Lao PDR. A range of initiatives focused on rights awareness, vocational training, income generation, community-based rehabilitation, UXO

clearance, sport, recreation and culture have been successfully implemented.

Coordinating bodies, international agencies and NGO's are continuing to work towards the creation of a more disability-inclusive Lao society into the future ("The Lao Disabled People's Association," n.d).

- The above focus has shown that people with disabilities are included in the existing programs of international organizations working in Laos. For example, Handicap International (HI) is an international NGO involved in the prevention of disabilities in Laos through the elimination of UXO. Its mission is to assist persons with disabilities in prevention, rehabilitation and development. World Concern started community-based rehabilitation in 1992 with the cooperation of the Ministry of Health (MOH) and National Center for Medical Readiness (NCMR). Their aim was to minimize an epidemic outbreak and the rate of disability through the improvement of village-level health (Japan International Cooperation Agency Planning and Evaluation Department, 2002).
- The LDPA is the organization which has collaborated with the Government to raise awareness, for example, on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. It provides a link between persons with disabilities and Government officers, INGOs and others. It also provides a link between persons with disabilities themselves, as communication and transport links are very poor, especially outside the main cities. The LDPA has organized workshops and seminars, both nationally and internationally, on the CRPD in conjunction with the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. These events were held at the offices of the LDPA. It brought together Government officials in the various departments whose job is to implement the CRPD within their department, review existing laws and develop new ones. The LDPA also invited international scholars and

government officers from other countries to share their experience and to give advice (O'Brien, 2011).

Overall there many organizations which mainly work on gender mainstreaming, and there are several organizations which work on promoting the rights of persons with disability. In order to be able to understand both concepts, I have focused my research on the Division for the Advancement of Women, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in Laos to explore how gender mainstreaming and the inclusion of persons with disability are applied in the organization. Next, I will discuss the purpose of this study and present my research questions.

### **Purpose of This Study**

A majority of Lao women, over 66%, are working in the agricultural sector (Watershoot, 2010); therefore, Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) plays an important role in promoting gender equality from national level to local village level. Despite the fact that the Ministry of Agriculture has responded to the call by the Government of Lao PDR to make progressive moves to promote the advancement of women, the objective has not yet been clearly defined and articulated in the MAF institutions, in particular policy, strategies and guidelines/tools, with an exception being the Forestry Sector Strategy (Watershoot, 2010). Even though the strategy was developed, the sector does not yet appear to have integrated gender into its operations. A contributing factor to this situation is a general lack of understanding and possibly some confusion among its staff (Watershoot, 2010). For this reason, my research will focus on the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) which performs as the gender focal point for LNCAW.



This research assesses whether DAW staff who work on this area understand what gender equality means, because they are the ones who will be the future trainers for other staff in the ministry. Knowledge gained by this research will be used to inform future training efforts by DAW staff who will be trainers for other staff in the ministry. Therefore, their understanding about gender mainstreaming and gender equality is essential because they can share that knowledge to lead the program successfully. I chose to investigate this particular topic because I am concerned about gender equality, especially how my country promotes gender equality. DAW at the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry is the focus organization which assists LNCAW to promote Lao women's rights to access to political, economic and social development by implementing gender mainstreaming policies through providing training, adding large numbers of women into the workforce, etc. And yet, no researcher has assessed this organization. I would like to start by examining the result of what this organization has already done so far and then evaluate whether their implementation plans work or not. Therefore, it is both timely and important to study and evaluate whether or not this organization is effective in enhancing gender equality in the gender mainstreaming program.

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "gender is the new concept in Laos. Despite reasonable equality in the law, many inequalities are evident in Laotian society, including most of the areas of MDG indicators" (United Nations Development Programme, 2007). Many international organizations which are partners of the Lao government conduct the assessment of gender projects that they are supporting, but none of them have assessed either the inclusion of

persons with disabilities or the gender focal point<sup>2</sup> at the ministerial level which helps LNCAW promote gender equality. This is particularly important given that women represent 66% of the workforce in the agriculture sector. However, their work doesn't count as income added to the country revenue (Watershoot, 2010). As Division for the Advancement of Women is the organization working for Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, it's important to study about this organization to learn how employees involved in the gender mainstreaming program understand what gender equality means and how they perceive the impact of gender equality.

To summarize from the preceding discussion, my research questions are the following:

- Find out how Lao staff and villagers who attended the gender mainstreaming program at DAW/MAF understand the meaning of gender equality;
- Examine their perception of how gender equality affects the development of the country;
- Find out the barriers that they believe prevent women from attending the gender mainstreaming program;
- Explore whether or not an inclusive approach to integrate people with disability into the policy in the implementation of gender mainstreaming program is applied and how they implement it in the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

The next chapter will explore how existing literature viewed the gender mainstreaming; gender equality definition; women's barriers to achieve gender

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<sup>2</sup> Gender focal point in a person or an organization works as the coordinator between ministry level and LNCAW.

equality; the impact of gender equality; and the inclusive approach in gender mainstreaming program.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **EVALUATING INCLUSIVENESS IN GENDER EQUALITY AND ACCESS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

#### **Gender Mainstreaming Strategy**

Gender mainstreaming was established in 1995 as an intergovernmental mandate in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (United Nations, 2002). Gender mainstreaming can be defined as an attempt to raise the gender equality issue and empower women in development organizations through capacity-building programs. According to United Nations, the definition of gender mainstreaming is “the process of assessing the implication for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated” (United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs, 1997). A common example of gender mainstreaming is providing training to strengthen women’s skills and capacity. But gender mainstreaming goes beyond increasing women's participation. It means bringing the experience, knowledge, and interests of women and men to bear on the development agenda. The goal of mainstreaming gender equality is the transformation of unequal social and institutional structures into equal and just structures for both men and women in the targeted organizations. The mainstreaming activities specifically target women’s priorities and needs, through, for example, legislation, policy development, research and projects/programs on the ground. Women-specific projects continue to play an important role in promoting gender equality. And yet, they are still needed

because gender equality has not yet been attained and gender mainstreaming processes are not well developed (United Nations, 2001(b)). Nevertheless, gender mainstreaming is still seen as the most “modern” approach to gender equality (Daly, 2005).

Kusakabe states that many countries attempt to implement the gender mainstreaming policy, using a variety of approaches. Kusakabe addresses some of the challenges of gender mainstreaming policy implementation at the provincial/commune and department levels in her research, such as the gender focal points, lack of resources, the evaporation of gender policies when it comes to implementation and the difficulty of gender mainstreaming in the face of gender biased organizational culture and discourse (Kusakabe, 2005). She also points out that although the Lao Women’s Union can reach local grassroots levels, it doesn’t mean that gender equality is completely promoted due to the barriers from organizational culture of the Women’s union. Kusakabe analyzes only how the Lao Women’s Union promotes gender equality and the challenges encountered by the organization. She doesn’t mention the Lao National Committee for the Advancement of Women, or whether this organization confronts the same challenges as Lao Women’s Union.

Watershoot looks at a different organization. Concerning the implementation of gender mainstreaming policy, she focuses on the strategy from Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. On the one hand, she points out the key gender issues occurring in the agricultural and forestry sector. On the other hand, she proposes the strategic plan to cope with those key gender issues (Watershoot, 2010). For instance, women as fully-fledged stakeholders in all sub-sectors of the Agriculture and Forestry sector; women’s access to resources and land and water; women as producers and insertion in cash-cropping, contract farming, extension services, and women’s

participation in relevant instances and representation bodies advocating for their needs and strategic interests. The proposed strategies to deal with those key gender issues are dissemination of the gender strategies; encourage women to participate in socioeconomic development and all activities; increase income by increasing agriculture and forestry products; and create conditions for technical training of women. This list of strategies provides clear and important solutions to the key gender issues mentioned above. However, Watershoot does not discuss whether and how each was actually implemented, or whether their implementation was successful.

In addition, Watershoot also does not discuss how DAW/MAF implements the gender mainstreaming program. Instead, she addresses the confusion of staff who implement gender mainstreaming programs and she describes some of the shortcomings of implementing the strategy which are:

- Weak advocacy/leadership skills from MAF/DAW;
- Weak exposure of MAF/DAW to the actual core of the business of MAF departments—some kind of side tracking into gender—stand alone business rather than mainstreaming;
- Weak exposure from other departments on the actual effectiveness of gender mainstreaming and hence lack of experience in networking with an unit that is perceived as gender stand alone;
- Small team size of DAW;
- Weak coordination of the process added to adequate understanding of how gender mainstreaming comes in; and
- Many hands into the document and no one technically skilled to understand the important of gender mainstreaming even without having DAW sitting in the team.

## **Meaning of Gender Equality**

Gender equality has been defined differently in different regions. According to the United Nations, gender equality means that the rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of individuals will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Equality does not mean “the same as”—promotion of gender equality does not mean that women and men will become the same. In this case, equality involves ensuring that the perceptions, interests, needs and priorities of women and men will be given equal weight in planning and decision-making. However, it is not necessary that women and men would have the same perceptions because they all have different roles and responsibilities to play in the society.

There are two rationales for promoting gender equality. Firstly, “equality between women and men—equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities—is a matter of human rights and social justice”. And secondly, greater equality between women and men is also a precondition for sustainable people-centered development (United Nations, 2001(a)). In other words, gender equality is not a ‘women’s issue’ but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development (United Nations, 2001(b)). Another organization from United Nations- UNHCR- defines gender equality as “an equal visibility, empowerment and participation of both sexes in all spheres of public and private life”. The article also discusses how European countries describe gender equality; it is defined as “giving girls and boys, women and men, de jure equal rights, equal opportunities, equal conditions and equal treatment in all fields of life and in all spheres of society”.

It is important to understand that women's and men's living conditions are very different- to some degree because of child bearing function of women. The main point is not the mere existence of such differences, but the fact that these differences should not have a negative impact on the living conditions of both women and men, should not discriminate against them and should contribute to an equal sharing of power in economy, society and policy making process (United Nations High Commissioner for Refuge, 1998). Gender equality is not synonymous with sameness, or with establishing men, their life style and condition as the norm. Gender equality means accepting and valuing equally the difference between women and men and the diverse roles they play in society. Gender equality includes the right to be different. This means taking into account the existing differences among women and men, which are related to class, political opinion, religion, ethnicity, race or sexual orientation (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee, 1998). Independent Consultant (2000) gives the definition of gender equality as equal treatment of men and of women. For example, equal pay for equal work, equal numbers of male and female beneficiaries, equal representation of men and women in staffing, equal allocation of budget and other resources for men and for women's activities. According to the United Nations, "equality is the cornerstone of every democratic society that aspires to social justice and human rights" (Grown, Gupta and Khan, 2003).

The term gender equality has been defined in multiple ways in the development literature and has been the subject of great debate in the U.N. The term gender equality has been borrowed from both frameworks to propose three primary domains or components of equality between women and men: capabilities, access to resources and opportunities, and agency or the ability to influence and contribute to



outcomes. The capabilities domain refers to basic human abilities as measured through education, health, and nutrition. Access to resources and opportunities refers primarily to equality in the opportunity to use or apply basic capabilities through access to economic assets (such as land and property) and resources (such as income and employment). The third domain, agency, is the defining element of the concept of empowerment and refers to the ability to make choices and decisions that can alter outcomes. Gender equality in this domain can only result from an equalizing in the balance of power between women and men in the household and societal institutions. Gender equality can have multiple meanings which depends on who defines it. According to the Lao context, the Division for the Advancement of Women defines gender equality as the values, attitude and understanding which require the equal role between women and men such as in political, economic, cultural-social and family life.

### **Women's Barriers to Achieve Equality**

Women can be important drivers of sustainable development, and strengthening their increased involvement in this process is increasingly included among the objectives of development projects, programs, and policies (World Bank, 2012). Interestingly, the problem about gender equality is gender hierarchy, not women (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee, 1998). Gender hierarchy places men higher than women; therefore, it's necessary to assure that the social construction of gender leaves room for difference and does not contain a notion of hierarchy. It implies that women and men need to work together to share their responsibility in removing imbalances in public and private life. This is a question of using competencies, skills and talents of each and every citizen, of involving both women and men in building society, solving problems and preparing the future.

Society, in order to develop on the utilization of all human resources, and both women and men participate fully to meet the different needs of society (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee, 1998). The following are some of the examples of women's issues in Europe (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee, 1998, P10):

Even if in Europe women have obtained *de jure* equal rights and equal status with men, they are still discriminated against in many areas of life. New forms of inequality have developed and there is increasing acknowledgement of the diversity between women.

The structural changes which have been occurring in Europe for over two decades, as a consequence of a globalization process of financial, capitalist and economic systems, accelerated technological innovation, greater world competitiveness and increasing liberalization, have been followed by a set of serious social problems which are producing millions of victims and are a menace to the European welfare model. Massive unemployment, greater inequalities, devaluation of human work, pauperization of large parts of societies, social exclusion, wars and armed conflicts, ecological imbalances are some of the issues that mobilize, today, the attention of governments and public authorities. These issues affect women differently than men and can limit their right to free choice such as in matters of sexuality, reproductive health and lifestyles. They also have the result that gender equality in many countries is not regarded as a priority, and that "more urgent" problems should be solved before gender equality is tackled.

Many former regimes in Central and Eastern Europe were characterized by a well-developed infrastructure which allowed women to combine work and family life, provided a high level of social security, an accessible health system or a more liberal legislation on abortion. Those rules, partly arising out of an equality ideology, had as a main objective to integrate women fully into the production process. Equal rights did not always allow for a free choice, and equality was mostly defined as sameness. Therefore, the current attitude towards equality policies is often a hesitant one. Moreover, the structural macro-economic and other problems make governments concentrate their efforts on 'heavy' policy areas, which, as mentioned above, leave little room for equality issues.

Grow, Gupta and Khan agree that gender inequalities exist because of discrimination in the family and societal institutions, and social, cultural, and religious norms that perpetuate stereotypes, practices and beliefs that are detrimental to women (Grow, Gupta and Khan, 2003). One barrier that stands in the way of women being able to use their capabilities, exploit opportunities, and exercise agency is violence. Furthermore, they also emphasize that worldwide, it has been estimated that violence against women is as serious a cause of death and incapacity among women of reproductive age as cancer, and is a greater cause of ill-health than traffic accidents and malaria combined (Grow, Gupta and Khan, 2003). Cultural barriers are also a challenge for gender equality because there is still division of labor in the home and workplace that separates women's and men's access to opportunities, especially attaining literacy, education, and employment (Inglehart & Norris, 2003). Inglehart & Norris (2003) also demonstrate that "women are not only limited by society in terms of the opportunities they seek, but also choose to limit themselves".

More women than men are active in agriculture and fisheries, but women farmers have little direct access to agricultural extension services. Ethnic Lao women have traditional rights to inherit and own land, but women in some upland ethnic groups have traditionally accessed land mainly through their husbands or male relatives. Women are extremely active in handicraft production, food processing, small-scale trading, and services. However, women entrepreneurs have limited access to market information, technical training, and financial services. As owners of micro and small businesses, they can also be hampered by complex business registration, licensing, and tax requirements (Asian Development Bank, 2009). The report also points out those poor women generally work much longer hours than men. Poor women have much lower literacy rates than the men of their villages. In the ethnic

minority villages surveyed, many women do not speak Lao. This seriously limits their ability to engage with health care workers, extension workers, traders, and other outside their villages (Asian Development Bank, 2009). Thomson & Baden (1993) state that even though it is obvious that women have contributed to both household as well as national economies, women still encounter a number of obstacles which deny them access to the means required to increase their labor productivity. Aside from the burden of housework, Lao women lack skills training in agriculture as there are no government extension services in the country. Even when this service did exist prior to 1975, women were denied access to agricultural training. Instead, they were taught sewing and cookery (Thomson & Baden, 1993). This reflects traditional stereotypes which view only males as farmers. In Laos, however, female farmers actually outnumber the males. A further burden is that women farmers lack access to the credit needed to expand production. Government agricultural credit schemes carry extremely high interest rates. Finally, women face increasing time and resource constraints resulting from the escalating deforestation which has occurred in Laos. The loss of forest has serious consequences for women as it forces them to travel greater distances to collect wood and other essential forest products (Thomson & Baden, 1993).

### **Impact of Gender Equality**

Some may wonder when an attempt to promote gender equality is achieved, what would the impacts be for the community. Several studies have established the benefits of reducing gender inequality as shown in some examples of the impact of gender equality: (1) giving women farmers in Kenya the same level of agricultural inputs and education as male farmers could increase yields obtained by women farmers by more than 20%. (2) countries in which the ratio of female-to-male

enrollment in primary and secondary school is less than 0.75 can expect levels of GNP that are roughly 25% lower than in countries in which there is less gender disparity in education (As cited in Grown, Gupta and Khan, 2003). In other words, research on gender inequality in the labor market shows that eliminating gender discrimination in occupation and pay could increase not only women's income, but also national income. For instance, if gender equality in the labor market in Latin America were to be achieved, not only could women's wages rise by about 50%, but the national output could rise by more than 5% (As cited in Grow, Gupta and Khan, 2003). Schwartz & Lifschitz (2009) mention in their literature that increased gender equality should permit both sexes to pursue more freely the values they inherently care about more. Drawing evolutionary and role theories, the authors postulate that women inherently value benevolence and universalism more than men do, whereas men inherently value power, achievement, and stimulation more than women do. For 19 European countries, Schwarts and Rubel reported that the greater the social, health, and employment equality of women and men in a country, the larger the sex differences in power and benevolence values. Surprisingly, in countries with greater gender equality, men attributed substantially more importance to power values but substantially less importance to benevolence values than women did. In countries with less gender equality, these sex differences were relatively small. Gender equality correlates highly with other societal characteristics known to affect men's and women's value priorities: country wealth (0.84; gross national product per capita), democracy (0.64), and cultural autonomy (0, 66) across 68 countries (Schwartz & Lifschitz, 2009).

However, it still takes a lot of time to completely achieve gender equality goals. One report states some problems about why gender equality has not yet been

fully achieved as following (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee, 1998, P11-12):

The main problem is the definition of equality used in very narrow one of *de jure* equality and the protection against discrimination is not always provided.

A second problem is the fact that women mainly had to work on these questions outside the 'mainstream' of society. Equality machineries are often considered to be in isolation, even if they are also a laboratory where excellent knowledge of gender issues is generated and concentrated. Looking back at what has already been said about the way in which societal structures reproduce gender inequality; this signifies that equality policy machineries function in a structure which upholds gender equality but which they cannot influence profoundly. Equality issues should be addressed where they are provoked. Equality policy machineries in some countries, even if they are attached to an important ministry, often have only a limited range of action and competencies. They have little influence on the policy areas that most affect people's lives and equal opportunity measures can hardly redress the imbalances provoked through other policies<sup>13</sup>.

A third problem is that the position of women in decision-making is weak in most countries. A more balanced presence of women and men would be needed to give gender equality a prominent place on the political agenda.

The last problem is partly due to the methods used up until now to promote gender equality. Most policies were concerned with the specific needs of women. Additionally, these policies mainly targeted women and not men, even those aimed at redressing the imbalances between the sexes. These policies, therefore, only reached a limited public which mainly consisted of women. It is clear that changes will be limited, as long as they only focus on one side of the problem. Equality policy should ensure that a gender perspective is integrated into all policy areas and that the whole of society is involved in promoting equality.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee (1998), achieving gender equality is a continuous process that has to be constantly put into question, thought about and redefined. At present, the most important targets for gender equality include the follow aspects (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee, 1998, P8-9):

An important target is the recognition and full implementation of women's rights as human rights. This includes effectively respecting, protecting and promoting the human rights of both women and men and by taking the necessary measures, enabling both women and men to enjoy fully these rights. It also means combating interferences with women's liberty and dignity.

The development and improvement of representative democracy is the most important pole. The persistent under-representation or sometimes absence of women in decision-making at all levels and in all fields of life is a major problem, even though there are great variations in this respect between countries. Promotion of the equal participation of women and men in political and public life and all other walks of life is part of the development of society. It's important for society as a whole that both women and men participate in all decisions taken in a society, given their various experiences in life.

The individual's economic independence, which leads to the securing of equal pay, equal access to credit, equal conditions on the labor market and the distribution of assets that take into account gender differences in private life. The position that women and men have in the economy is in many ways crucial to balance of power between them. Fighting the feminization of poverty is also important in this regard. Linked to the need for the individual's economic independence is the aim to reconcile family and working life for both men and women.

Education is a key target for gender equality as it involves the ways in which societies transfer norms, knowledge and skills.

The last target to be mentioned is women's and men's common acknowledgement of need to remove imbalances in society and their shared responsibility in doing so.

The achievement of these above targets will lead to a society where both women and men experience well-being in public and in private life. It is also a way to a deeper understanding and implementation of democracy as such (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee, 1998).

### **Inclusion Approach in Gender Mainstreaming Program**

“An inclusive approach means a climate in which everyone can endorse his or her knowledge and talents so that these can be used in the most efficient way and to the greatest benefit for the operations. Inclusion is not a strategy to make people fit

into existing systems and structures. Inclusion is not equivalent to integration” (Department of Information, 2008). Corsi, & Lodovici (2009) describe active inclusion as a strategy which consists of adequate income support; inclusive labor markets and access to quality services. They state that the inclusion in these three fields should include every individual with or without disability. In their report, active inclusion has a number of implications from a gender perspective. For instance, the gender disparities in exposure to poverty show higher rates for women than men and do so in a life-cycle perspective. This is partly due to women’s greater likelihood for slower, shorter and/ or interrupted careers and on average lower earnings than men. Furthermore, the disadvantages faced by women of certain vulnerable groups tend to be more accumulated than those for men from the same groups.

Gender mainstreaming is identified as an integral part of the active inclusion policy framework in order to eliminate these inequalities (Corsi, & Lodovici, 2009). In the case of the development of active inclusion policies, this would entail that gender equality concerns are clearly taken into account at all stages of policymaking, which implies a proper knowledge of how and where to find relevant and sex-specific information and the visible integration of gender equality concerns in the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies. This requires political commitment, adequate human resources (trainings or external expertise if necessary) and synergies among the different stakeholders, including the involvement of gender equality NGOs into open consultations.

There is growing recognition among organizations engaged in development of the need to include persons with disabilities in development activities. Porez Bueno (2012) describes in his work that there’s a strong effort to secure recognition for women and girls with disabilities as rights holders worthy of the same protection and



recognition as other citizens. However, he point out that women and girls with disability are facing multiple discriminations which are considered as social, historic, political and cultural elements and recognizes the reality of each person based on the mix of all the relevant factors affecting the individual.

Gender and disability have been addressed separately when formulating and implementing equality policies, and this has prevented greater progress from being made in understanding the ways in which these two factors -- first of all, the needs and demands of women with disabilities were thought of as those of a vulnerable group within another vulnerable group (persons with disability) and marginalized by them; secondly, gender and disability have been addressed separately by the women's movement and the disability movement and there has been a considerable gap between the two movements- causes of discrimination, interact, and in joint actions to combat discrimination. Therefore, the political and regulatory frameworks in the fields of gender and disability do not properly reflect the needs of women with disabilities; consequently, they condemn and subject them to permanent structural inequality (Porez Bueno, 2012). This segregation in including the disability perspective in gender policies and the gender perspective in disability policies is also reflected in initiatives taken by United Nations agencies and in UN instruments. It is claimed that there is the disconnection between gender approach and disability such as disconnect between legal instruments concerning gender-based discrimination and disability-based discrimination. In other words, the approach to gender discrimination and the approach to disability discrimination have evolved in parallel, with insufficient linkages to allow the gender perspective to be mainstreamed in targeted public policies for persons with disability (Porez Bueno, 2012). In addition, Porez also points out that the Convention on Elimination of any form of Discrimination

Against Women does not cover the aspect of gender with disability whereas the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability includes both factors-gender and disability-and in particular policy for women with disability. As a result, Porez suggests that to overcome the obstacles preventing women with disabilities from participating fully and on equal terms with others, a mixed strategy is needed involving greater awareness and participation in society, a renewed approach to equality measures by the Third Sector, and the formulation of disability policies and equality policies including the gender perspective and drawing on the rights and freedoms set out in the *International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, which specifically links the principle of non-discrimination to women with disabilities exercising their fundamental rights. Ensuring the gender approach is mainstreamed in disability policies does not simply mean combating intersectional discrimination due to disability and sex: it involves a real shift towards strong equality policies covering everyone to enable structural inequalities to be broken down and, in short, seek to extend social cohesion.

### **CIPP Evaluation Model as the Approach to Evaluating a Program**

The main purpose of program evaluation is to find out the value of the program and whether the program succeeds in the intended objective or not. Therefore, it is essential for every organization to evaluate the program that they are working for. In this research, I choose to evaluate DAW by using CIPP evaluation model. The CIPP model first was developed since 1965 because U.S public schools were finding they could not meaningfully and feasibly evaluate their federally supported projects using the “gold standard” for program evaluations: controlled, variable-manipulating, comparative experiments (cited by Alkin, 2004, p251). Since then, the CIPP evaluation model is widely used as a framework to evaluate programs,

projects, institutions, products and systems. Stufflebeam defines the CIPP model as a comprehensive framework for guiding formative and summative evaluations of projects, programs, personnel, products, institutions, and systems (Stufflebeam, 2004, p245). It is common in the educational field. Over the years, the model has been refined (Alkin, 2004) and used by a wide range of disciplines (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007).

CIPP model is an evaluation approach which makes explicit the four components of Context, Input, Process and Product of the organization or program needed to be assessed (Sancar, Tokmak, Baturay, & Fadde, 2013). The CIPP model will assist the program to assess its own needs as well as the community's needs (Zhang et al, 2011). Context will identify the needs of people or clients that the organization intends to help. Input will determine what resources are available or if there is any alternative to do the evaluation. Process will address how well the project's plan is implemented, what barriers prevent the program from success and what strategies are used to evaluate the program. Product will assess if the program achieves its objectives, what result is obtained, how well were needs met and what further should be done (Alltucker, personal communication, 2013). All four components of Stufflebeam's CIPP evaluation model play important and necessary roles in the planning, implementing and assessment of a program. "According to Stufflebeam (2003), the objective of Context evaluations is to assess the overall environmental readiness of the project, examine whether existing goals and priorities are attuned to needs, and assess whether proposed objectives are sufficiently responsive to assessed needs. Context evaluations assess needs, problems, assets, and opportunities to help decision makers define goals and priorities and to help the broader group of users judge goals, priorities and outcomes. Input evaluations assess

alternative approaches, competing action plans, staffing plans, and budget for their feasibility and potential cost-effectiveness to meet targeted needs and achieve goals. Process evaluations assess the implementation of plans to help staff carry out activities and later to help the broad group of users judge program performance and interpret outcomes. Product evaluations identify and assess outcomes-intended and unintended, short-term and long-term—both to help staff keep an enterprise focused on achieving important outcomes and ultimately to help the broader group of users gauge the effort's success in meeting targeted needs (Alkin, 2004).

Fundamentally, the use of CIPP Model is intended to promote growth and to help the responsible leadership and staff of an institution systematically to obtain and use feedback so as to excel in meeting important needs, or at least, to the best they can with the available resources (Stufflebeam, 1983, p118). The purpose of this thesis is to improve the gender mainstreaming program, and so the CIPP focus on improvement makes it suitable as a framework. The CIPP model emphasizes that “evaluation’s most important purpose is not to prove, but to improve” (As cited on Alkin, 2004). Evaluation is thus conceived primarily as a functional activity oriented in the long run to stimulating, aiding, and abetting efforts to strengthen and improve organization.

The CIPP model treats evaluation as an essential concomitant of improvement and accountability within a framework of appropriate values and a quest for clear, unambiguous answers (Stufflebeam, 2004). Furthermore, he also states that the model employs multiple methods, is based on a wide range of applications, is keyed to professional standards for evaluations, is supported by an extensive literature, and is buttressed by practical procedures, including a set of evaluation checklists. This model is subject to continuing assessment and further development (Stufflebeam,

2004, P262). This model is widely used as a model designed to improve what a program has already done and make the program better for the people they are intended to serve. The CIPP Model is a comprehensive framework for conducting and reporting evaluations, and can be used in internal evaluations, program self-evaluations and external evaluations (Stufflebeam, 2004). Therefore it suits for evaluation the program working on gender. The CIPP model will be applied in this thesis as a formative evaluation which aims at producing findings, conclusions and recommendations that are intended to improve the gender mainstreaming program.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The research objective is to explore how government officials who are involved in gender mainstreaming programs think about gender equality and inclusion of persons with disability as well as its effect to the country as a whole and to their organization specifically. I began the process of conducting this research by requesting the permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB)/Research Compliance Service to do the research in Laos because my research involved interviewing people. Because the research was conducted in Laos, the interview transcripts were translated from Lao language into English after the data were collected.

The risk from this research was minimal, mostly from the risk of a confidentiality breach. The confidentiality risk was minimized through careful maintenance of confidentiality because the interview questions were mostly about participants' perspective on the gender equality and the gender mainstreaming program activities. The research was not talking about a harmful political issue in Laos. However, participants could have felt embarrassed and fear antagonizing their supervisors if they talked about negative sides of the gender mainstreaming outcomes. Before each interview, I went over the verbal consent form with each participant in person once they accepted to participate in my research interview. Participants were recruited voluntarily and they could withdraw from participating at any time.

I was an intern at the division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in August 2013. By doing an internship, I was able to request gender mainstreaming secondary and primary data. The secondary

data were obtained from several documents, including reports, documents for evaluations and gender strategies. Primary data were collected through my own field work interviews.

Semi-structured interviews were used as the main method to collect data. The target participants were divided into two groups so the interview took place in two locations. One was the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, office of the division for the Advancement of Women, in Vientiane Capital. The second one was in the division of Forestry in Savanaket Province. I traveled to Savanaket Province by car with one facilitator from DAW who helped me coordinate the other interviewees in Savanaket Province. In total, I spent three weeks in Vientiane and one week in Savanaket province.

I organized the participants' recruitment with help from the head of division for the Advancement of Women. Participants were invited based on their job duties and responsibilities concerning gender mainstreaming policy and activities in unit at the ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. For this reason, no personal preferences on gender or age range were involved. My position as an intern, along with my previous contacts with Lao government officials, enabled me to interview 11 people, of 3 men and 8 women, (7 people from the Ministry and 4 people from Savannaket province) including leaders and provincial staffs who currently are involved with the gender mainstreaming program from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Employees who are not involved in gender mainstreaming programs were excluded from this interview. All selected participants were in the age range of 30-60 and they are tasked with promoting gender equality in the organization. I requested contact information for prospective participants from Division for the Advancement of Women. Selected participants were contacted by a phone call or a written interview request to set up an

interview time schedule. I conducted the research interview in Lao language. The interview conversation took about 60 minutes per person and participants were required to participate in person at least once. Besides asking the questions, I also took notes while participants responded.

In order to guide my research, I developed ten interview questions based on a review of the literature, conversations with government officials and my own knowledge of Lao culture. :

1. How do you define gender equality? Can you give some examples?
2. How does gender equality impact the organization and the country? Give examples.
3. In your opinion, what are the strengths and challenges of your division?  
What should your organization improve?
4. What are the activities used to promote gender equality in your organization?
5. How many women in your organization participate in those activities?  
How are they involved?
6. Is there any incentive to encourage women to participate in the proposed activities? If yes, what are they? If not, how do you encourage women to participate?
7. How many gender mainstreaming programs/activities are implemented by your organization? How are those programs implemented? Who leads the programs?
8. What do you think about those programs? Are they successful or not?  
Why?
9. What do you know about inclusive approach?



10. Do you think LWU, LNCAW or DAW division applies an inclusive approach to the implementation of gender mainstreaming programs or activity? How? Can you give an example?

- If not, do you think they should do so and how?

Besides conducting semi-structured interviews for data collection, the participant observation method was used to analyze how participants react to the gender mainstreaming programs they are working for. After interviewing all participants, qualitative data were analyzed to identify trends and major themes (Powell & Renner, 2003). After familiarizing with the data, thematic categories began naturally to appear among the responses. From this thematic analysis, my finding is reliable and valid because I was able to generate codes for tagging and organizing the data that I have collected (Powell & Renner, 2003). The CIPP model for program evaluation was also used as a framework to organize the research. The answers to my interview questions were interpreted based on the elements of CIPP model, which are based on Context, Input, Process and Product. In other words, the process of analyzing comprises collecting information/data from the field, sorting that information into categories, formatting the information and finally identifying them in concept was done in accordance with CIPP model (Stufflebeam, 1983).

The process of obtaining internal information and interviews was facilitated by my internship in Laos where it allowed me to interview high position leaders at that Ministry. When I arrived in Laos, there were difficulties in arranging the interview because some participants were away on business and I had to wait until they got back to work to set up the interview. I felt that one month was not enough time for collecting insightful data.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESULTS**

To provide context for the most interesting themes that I found throughout the interview, I would like to briefly describe how the 10 interview questions were answered by the 11 participants. The results for each question are shown as below:

1. How do you define gender equality? Can you give some examples?

Almost all participants described gender equality as in the gender strategies lectures which stated that men and women are equal in all areas to participate in political, social, economic and cultural spheres. In addition, they also mentioned about the equal ability to gain the same resources and opportunities.

2. How does gender equality impact the organization and the country? Give examples.

Respondents viewed the impact of gender equality as having both positive and negative sides. Some participants said that it would take long time to accomplish gender equality because there were a lot of barriers for women to gain equal opportunities as men. However, participants view the achievement as positive side for the development of the community as well as country. For example, they said women would gain access to higher education and better work. They would get more opportunities to learn new skills and be able to help their family and community.

3. In your opinion, what are the strengths and challenges of your division? What should your organization improve?

Leadership by a strong organization like Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Lao NCAW is the most common answer for the strength of the division. In addition, respondents also discussed how DAW has strictly followed the monthly

and yearly plan to promote gender equality. Respondents demonstrated that there are still some challenges that need to be addressed, such as the need of human resources and financial resources.

4. What are the activities used to promote gender equality in your organization?

The most usual activities used to promote gender equality are to organize training for both genders to deeply understand what exactly gender equality is. Gender-related hand out will be distributed during the training. One of the issues addressed during the interview is that men are always absent for the gender training because they think that gender training is for women.

5. How many women in your organization participate in those activities? How are they involved?

There are 5 female officers and 1 male officer in DAW. Women took turns to attend the technical training. Most of the women participated in the training at least one time and they were trained by foreign experts. They were chosen to be involved in the activities according to their ability and skills.

6. Is there any incentive to encourage women to participate in the proposed activities? If yes, what are they? If not, how do you encourage women to participate?

The respondents stated that there was no incentive needed to encourage women to participate in the gender mainstreaming activity because they all wanted to improve their ability. Therefore, attending the activity or training gives women a chance to learn new gender concepts and know their rights. However, one participant stated that in order to encourage women to participate, after the training they will get a certificate.

7. How many gender mainstreaming programs/activities are implemented by your organization? How are those programs implemented? Who leads the programs?

Mostly the head and some staff from the DAW lead the gender training. But sometimes, there are also trainers from LNCAW or foreign experts from ADB lead the training. According to DAW's yearly plan, DAW is responsible for organizing the training for every department and project at the ministry. Besides organizing the training, DAW also evaluates each department and program that DAW has trained.

8. What do you think about those programs? Are they successful or not? Why?

Respondents said that the program was successful because they could see that the number of women has constantly increased year after year. Women always participate in the training however it also depends on the available resources such as gender trainer, budget and location.

9. What do you know about inclusive approach? and 10. Do you think LWU, LNCAW or DAW division applies an inclusive approach to the implementation of gender mainstreaming programs or activity? How? Can you give an example? If not, do you think they should do so and how?

Another issue that was raised during the interviews was that the gender mainstreaming policy has not mentioned the inclusion approach in the policy yet. Most of the participants acknowledged that inclusion of the persons with disabilities is important but they do not talk about this or discuss about this in the policy or in the training.

Many themes have come up during the interview. However, in this chapter, I will focus on the most important themes that emerged from the responses to the interview questions.

### **Perception of Gender Equality**

The question asked to seek the understanding of participants on gender quality is “How do you define gender equality?”. The finding identified five primary thematic categories emerging from the responses: Physical, Intelligence, Family, Workplace, and Agency. The following paragraphs will outline each of these categories and discuss the implications of the data.

#### *Physical Performance*

This category encompassed participant thoughts regarding physical ability of women and men. They emphasize that gender equality does not mean that women and men should have the same ability to carry the heavy objects or have the same strong body as men. One participant stated “gender equality means everything should be equal. It does not mean that men drink beer, but women drink water. Lifting heavy items are not the matter because that is nature, but sharing other responsibility needs to be equal”. This statement explicitly shows that participants did not view gender equality as equality in physical ability.

#### *Intelligence*

“Women and men have equal ability to think and share their ideas” is one of the definitions given by respondents. Another definition given by one of the respondents was “In family, husband and wife should share the responsibility. In the organization, it’s necessary to include both genders. They need to respect each other, have the same rights, have rights of possession and participate in every activity. Those were related to intelligence of the both gender, not physical strengths”.

### *Family*

Participants stated that women and men should share the role in the family. They said that it's not only women who should cook or do housework, but men also should help. In addition, the participants also stated that gender equality means women are allowed to take part in the big decision-making in the family with men regardless of division of labor. One of the participants gave the example of his own wife, who makes the decisions in finance and how to expense money. Another comment made by one respondent was "at the family level, husband and wife should divide the responsibility at home, try to figure out what should be taken care of and by whom, and the rest of the work they should share the responsibility. If they have children, either boy or girl, they both should be loved equally. In addition, they should attain the same education level without discrimination".

### *Workplace*

Participants proposed that the meaning of gender equality in the workplace is the ability to take part in decision making and also have equal opportunity to get promoted to the high leadership position. For example, "Gender equality is women and men get the same opportunity to work, vote, and speak equally. In the organizational system, women can be the governor as shown in one of the district in Savannaket right now. Or even in the village level, women also play an important role in their village", stated by one informant.

### *Agency*

Another interesting theme that occurred during the interview was that gender equality is viewed as the ability of women as well as men to have access or have equal opportunities to participate in political, economic, social and cultural sectors without any discrimination. One respondent stated "according to the Lao constitution

in 2003, gender equality means equal in legislation, economy, society, culture, and family. Equality in society should show that women can have a role and be able to perform their capacity to men. Also at family level, there should be mutual understanding about division of labor and help each other in the family”.

However, respondents demonstrated that there are some improvements that need to be addressed, such as women need more opportunities to get involved in working areas in order to obtain equal opportunity as men. Furthermore, women have to be brave to show their autonomy and ability.

### **The Impact of Gender Equality**

In answer to the question “How does gender equality impact the organization and the country?”, there are two primary themes expressed by participants: Country’s Development and Opportunity for Women. The following paragraphs will outline each of these categories and discuss the implications of the data.

#### *Gender Equality and the Development of the Country*

The majority of participants responded that achieving gender equality would take a lot of time because old mindsets still exist and are hard to eliminate from men’s thoughts. However, the participants said that if Lao society does achieve gender equality, the impact would be that the number of female in the workforce for the country will increase because women as well as men have the same opportunity to get a job. Consequently, it will lead to an increase in productivity. They stated that the number of women in agricultural sector is more than 50% of total agricultural labor force. For this reason, if their work is counted as income providers, the government will benefit because national income will increase. As a result, citizens will have better living conditions. One of the respondents said: “Society will be better developed because women and men are like two legs. They need to work together if

they want the development goes faster in every fields. Only one leg can't achieve development goal".

Improvement in the educational system is also one of the positive impacts brought by gender equality which will result in increased literacy rates. According to the Lao NCAW Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women 2011-2015, the government has amended several legal regulations and laws, namely the law of education, and the strategic plan for education development. The government was able to reduce the illiteracy rate among women between age 15-40 by 84.15% in 2010 (Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women 2011-2015, 2012). Moreover, the participants also emphasized that gender equality will impact social acknowledgement of women's rights and the respect among family members.

However, some participants view the impact of gender equality as one of the factors which will make social and cultural change in the negative way. The example given in this case was that women, especially married women who traditionally stay at home at night will start to go out and come home late like their husbands do. Consequently, other family members or relatives will view her as an irresponsible person.

#### *Gender Equality and Women's Opportunities*

The interview results indicate that most participants agreed that women's lives have improved after they learned about their rights and what they could do to improve their status in the family. Many women now feel able to make their own decisions at the family level as well as the workplace level. Participants, as a result, viewed the achievement of gender equality as having benefit for women. One of the true stories shared by respondent is that:

"There is a couple in the village. They are in debt and live in poor condition. Only the husband works because he thinks his



wife cannot do anything besides doing housework. One day, the wife asked her husband if she could sell the vegetable in the market. Unfortunately, her husband would not allow her to sell the vegetable. He said that selling vegetable would not bring lots of income so he disagrees with her idea. However, the wife did not listen to her husband. She went to the market and sold vegetable while her husband went to work. She kept selling for several months until her husband noticed the differences in the house. There were new furniture and kitchen equipment. Their debt decreased a lot which make the husband wanted to know how his little money could pay off a lot of debt. Finally, he decided to ask his wife what she did and where she got money from. His wife decided to tell her husband the truth about selling vegetable in the market and how she took some profits to pay off the debt and redecorate their house. Once the husband knew all the truth, he said “If I had known that selling vegetable brought a lot of income to the family, I would have allowed you to do so long time ago”. Since then, when he had free time, he went to the market to help his wife sell vegetable.”

The above story shows that if women get opportunity to work or access to resources, they will bring a big change to the family. Not only can they improve their living condition, but they also help the family live in better condition.

Another story told by one officer is how women can generate income from attending the training in the village.

“Most of the time women in Yarnngsoong Village, Savannaket province, help their family plant rice. There are two seasons for plant and harvest rice paddies. In the past, women just did housework or did nothing while waiting for the rice to grow. They had no income other than selling rice at the market. But now after the training, women in the village learned how to plant other crops that they can sell such as papaya or weaving the basket while waiting for the time to plant or harvest rice. Those activities allow housewife generate income without leaving the village to find a part time job because those are the things that they can make at home. Now, they all earn extra income to help their own family live better. Thanks to the training organizer, a lot of women get more skills and that allow them to generate income”.

The story shows that the training does not only promote gender equality, but also teach some skills to women so that they have opportunity to earn extra income.

Respondents recognized many advantages of gender equality, but they also expressed some concerns. Their concerns are especially important because they need to be addressed if efforts toward gender equality are going to be successful.

➤ **Positives:**

- Women get opportunity to attain education and gain more knowledge.
- Women gain access to more available resources namely economic, politic, social, culture opportunities.
- Women take more part in decision making both family and workplace level.
- Women know how to manage income, and time for family and work.
- Women have an opportunity to be a future leader. One participant gave the example that now his district has a female governor which proves that women also have opportunity to get into high position if they are qualified.
- Women gain respect from men in terms of their determination and the ability to work hard.

➤ **Negatives:**

- Once women get equal right to men, it makes divorces rate increase.
- The new mindset of gender equality still not acceptable for some conservative men who will prevent women from having equal rights.
- Some participants showed their worries that women will cause inappropriate social behavior such as going home too late or drinking too much alcohol.

### **Women's Barriers to Achieve Gender Equality**

The question asked to find out what barriers for women to achieve gender equality was “Is there any incentive to encourage women to participate in the proposed activities? If yes, what are they? If not, how do you encourage women to participate?” At first, I intentionally asked if the organization provides any incentive

for women to participate in the gender mainstreaming program. Answers to this question were mostly not because most of the time women are self-aware that they would like to take part of the program. However, they said there were some difficulties that made them give up participating in the program. So I followed up by asking about the difficulties that prevent women from having gender equality, and their answers clustered in two themes as mentioned below:

### *Women and Traditional Practices*

#### Family Traditional Practice

Some interviewees said that the barriers preventing women from achieving equal rights are traditional practices, “Marriage is one of the main barriers that slow down women’s participation in workforce and social activities”, stated one of the participants. Childbearing is another issue for women. Almost all participants talked about how once women get married, they tend to quit their jobs and only focus on taking care of their children. This problem still exists because there is discrimination against women for working outside in the family. Respondents pointed out that the old mindsets that men are the leaders and women are the followers are still barriers, especially for people who live in rural areas and do not attain high education. Participants addressed the issue that women encounter from division of labor at home. For instance, women always do house work and take care of children when men do not have much to do, except working outside. Sometimes, men can go to parties with friends outside while women have to wait at home and stay with children.

#### Lao Women’s Personalities

Many participants expressed concerns over how Lao women are raised and socialized. They stated that women are shy and always volunteer to give up their rights to men because they think men can do better than they can. Interviewees also

said that women are not brave and enthusiastic enough to directly express their opinions because once they are too outstanding, they will be criticized. In addition to these personality traits, women also face difficulty in time management. “Once women have kids, they tend to leave work early and do not care about work as much as the single women do” was stated by one respondent. This shows that managing time between family and work becomes an issue for married women. The stereotype about women’s caring and loving characteristics make an impact on their time management both at home and work. For this reason, most people think that women are dedicated to family more than work.

#### *Women and Hierarchy System*

- It’s interesting that almost all participants agreed that even though the gender strategies stated women and men have equal right at the workplace, in reality women hardly take part in the decision making for important issues or even qualify for higher positions. One participant even said that it took her several years to move up to higher positions. Some participants mentioned the difficulty of married women to go for training outside of the hometown; therefore, mostly men are chosen to do that training. That is to say different work is assigned for women and men, which is why women never get a chance to improve their capacity, stated one participant.

- Women are ignored even though they work as hard as men in the workplace. One of the participants addressed that because of lack of opportunity for women to attain higher education, some women officers could not get promoted and qualify to attend the high level training. Women are ignored because the job duty and what they have learned does not match with the requirement.

## **Inclusion Approach in Implementing Gender Mainstreaming Program**

The interview result showed that unfortunately, the inclusive approach is not being applied in the gender strategy in written form. The response to this concern was that the policy includes everyone but no one specifically discusses about people with disability and how to deal with this issue yet. One of the officers said that there are a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on promoting the rights of people with disability and the ministry of labor and social welfare is working on this issue too. These organizations have provided a skill center for people with disability who need working skills. Here is the quote from that participant “Our organization has not yet thought about including persons with disabilities into the work plan or including them in any activities. It should be included in the social welfare law though. Mostly Non-governmental organizations work on this issue but not the government. We never thought about it yet maybe because we lack financial support. I support the inclusiveness idea and we should promote that persons with disability also have skills”. All respondents acknowledge the importance of people with disability in agriculture sectors. A respondent said “there is actually a policy for blind persons, which give them advices and support their living condition. However, in term of agricultural production, the health of persons with disability should be considered first to see whether they can work and in what conditions”. One of the participants also told me the story about a man who cannot walk, but he does help his wife to do accounting at home while his wife goes to meet customers in the market. However, they stated that usually people with disability are left out of agricultural work because they cannot work as hard as other people.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

Because my original concern was to evaluate the successes and challenges of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's gender mainstreaming and inclusion of persons with disability, I have used the CIPP evaluation framework to structure my discussion of what my research has revealed about the Ministry's efforts. It highlights discussion of both strengths and weaknesses in the Context, Input, Process, and Product of the ministry's mainstreaming efforts.

#### **CIPP Evaluation Model**

##### *Context*

It is interesting that almost all respondents viewed the Context of gender equality to mean how it is mentioned in the gender strategies lectures which described men and women as equal in all areas to participate in political, social, economic and cultural spheres. Participants' definitions of gender equality are similar to those given by United Nations or European Organizations. However, gender equality goes beyond the women's issue because it requires men's involvement. It's not only about the ability of women and men to get the same opportunity in all fields, but it's also about how men react and treat women in reality. As revealed in my field work there are only three men out of eleven informants who are dealing with the advancement of women. This shows that promoting gender equality is still just "women talk to women". It is unclear whether most men really care about promoting women's rights. The most important point here is how to measure whether women and men really have equal rights and opportunities. The indicators to evaluate whether the organization succeeds in promoting gender equality or not, include not only an increase in the number of female officers, but the opportunities that women get out of the policy. It's easy to

claim the achievement of a certain percent goal to recruit women in the organization or an increase in women's participation in decision making, but men still outnumber women at all levels of the organization.

Achieving gender equality in Laos is still a long term project because of the existence of cultural barriers. My findings agree with the literature describing the barriers women face from the hierarchy system which places men higher than women. Division of labor in the family and work place is another crucial burden. Women have a hard time to manage family time if they have to work outside as well as do cooking and housework. It creates double burdens as the social and cultural norms perpetuate stereotypes and beliefs that are detrimental to women. Furthermore, women choose to limit their ability because of the old stereotype which causes them to not be able to access higher education, health care and employment. Women living in remote areas, in particular outside Vientiane Capital City, are the most disadvantaged because they live far away from services and resources.

It's interesting that no one in my interviews ever mentioned the inclusion approach to involve people with disabilities in the gender mainstreaming program. Inclusion is still a new idea and it is overlooked by the policy makers. It is obvious to me that gender and disability are still separate topics for my respondents. Although the informants agreed that it's important to raise awareness of including the rights of people with disabilities into the gender mainstreaming strategy, this is still a new idea for Laos and people have very little experience about how to treat people with disability properly because discrimination still exists. The situation in Laos reflects the analysis provided by Porez Bueno (2012):

“Gender and disability have been addressed separately when formulating and implementing equality policies, and this has prevented greater progress from being made in understanding the ways in which these two factors -- first of all, the needs and demands

of women with disabilities were thought of as those of a vulnerable group within another vulnerable group (people with disabilities) and marginalized by them; secondly, gender and disability have been addressed separately by the women's movement and the disability movement and there has been a considerable gap between the two movements- causes of discrimination, interact, and in joint actions to combat discrimination. Therefore, the political and regulatory frameworks in the fields of gender and disability do not properly reflect the needs of women with disabilities; consequently, they condemn and subject them to permanent structural inequality (Porez Bueno , 2012, P22-23)”

### *Inputs*

Input refers to the resources that the organization uses to run the program. In this case, I have divided the input into four categories:

- **Human resources** include skills and knowledge of staff, and foreign expertise. There are only 6 staff in the DAW, which is insufficient to be responsible for organizing the training and monitoring the success of all the training.
- **Financial resources:** Part of the funds that DAW gets are from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and part are from international counterparts such as World Bank or Asian Development Bank. Most of the participants agreed that the organization lacks or does not have adequate budget to operate all of the gender mainstreaming activities at the same time.
- **Infrastructure** includes vehicles, buildings, equipment, supplies, and facilities. For the input component, it is essential to learn what Gender Mainstreaming Training Tools are available for promoting gender equality.

According to participants' responses, there are:

- Gender mainstreaming strategies 2011-2015
- Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)



- Family Law
- Other document related to gender equality and development
- **Social resources** are the outside networks which DAW cooperates and coordinates with in order to promote gender equality. The main organization that works together with DAW is the Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women. In addition, DAW also works with World Bank and Asian Development Bank.

### *Process*

The Process of promoting the gender mainstreaming policy is to disseminate the available resources that the program has through training. DAW implements the gender training by organizing it from the central level/ministry level to the provincial/district level. In my interview I also asked participants about the strengths and weaknesses of DAW. Below are the main points that participants addressed:

#### Strengths:

- Led by a strong organization. Some participants emphasize that DAW at the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry is a role model in terms of implementing the gender mainstreaming because the organization has its own strategies as the guideline.
- Strictly implements the monthly and yearly plan under the leadership of the committees for the advancement of women in the ministry.
- Gives opportunity to women.

#### Weaknesses:

As mentioned in the input section, financial and human resources are not sufficient. As a result, not surprisingly, the limitations on resources have had a serious impact on the process of implementation of gender mainstreaming and

inclusion of persons with disability. The goal of the DAW is to be the gender focal point for LNCAW in disseminating gender mainstreaming strategies to their staff who work in the city and province. In this case, other government officials who are not in the DAW, especially women, are the beneficiaries of gender equality promotion. According to the interview results, I think that the needs of those beneficiaries are met because the way they described the meaning of gender equality is precise and clear, which shows that they understand the meaning. But there are still problems with the number of staff who promote gender equality. The division is quite small and not everyone can be the trainer. That is to say, they lack human resources, especially because not everyone graduates from a gender-related field or has learned about gender before. In order to be able to train other staff, they need specific gender training courses taught by professional gender trainers. From my point of view, the majority of the staff does not have sufficient skill training to meet the requirement of the job. One of the things is that in the educational system in Laos, there's no gender studies course available yet. Therefore, it requires special training from technical staff that have learned gender studies from abroad or from expatriates who work in Laos.

The lack of financial resources is the main challenge that concerned most interviewees because to increase the perception of gender equality requires money to organize the training as well as to train facilitators. They also addressed human resources, which are needed in order to disseminate the gender information or strategies. Recently, there are few local gender experts who are able to train local officers as well as local villagers.

This research explores what Kusakabe left out about the challenges of LNCAW which she has not mentioned. In her research, she only discussed the challenges faced by LWU which are the gender focal points, lack of resources, and gender-biased in the organization. This research found that LWU and LNCAW/DAW face similar problem in terms of the implementation of gender mainstreaming policy, promoting gender equality in particular. My findings support Kusakabe's point about the evaporation of gender policies when it comes to implementation and the difficulty of gender mainstreaming in the face of gender-biased organizational culture and discourse. When organizations would like to choose women for the field trip, staff who organize the trip could be biased because of the culture. For example, they do not ask if women are willing to go or not, instead they just assume that women have kids, and they are weak. They are not suitable for this job.

One of the issues addressed during the interviews is that men are always absent for the gender training because they think that gender training is for women. When talking about gender, it's common to think of it as the priority job for women to learn what their rights are and what they should do to be able to access to the resource. However, this research suggests another important issue is identifying men who can be open-minded about gender equality and give opportunities for women.

### *Product*

The program's Product is partly achieved as the participants stated that there are now more women who take part in important positions such as being the head of division or the deputy department head in the work place. Importantly, they are able to make their own decisions in the work place, even though it is not a major decision.

The organization monitors the achievement of implementation of gender mainstreaming policy by counting the number of women who participate in the agricultural area or working in the organization. In other words, the output of the organization results in an increasing number of women who get involved in the workplace or training, thus those numbers can be used as evaluation tools to determine whether the program has implemented the strategy well or not. According to the summary and assessment of implementation of strategy for advancement of women in the sector 2011-2015, the number of women who were recruited in the sector is increasing. For instance, from 2006 to 2010, 32.9% of staff are females; compared to the plan (29%) there is an increase of 3.9%. Table 1 shows that in 2008-2010 Agriculture and Forestry Sector recruited 682 staff in total, 187 females and 495 males. Even though the number of women recruited or promoted in the organization constantly augments, does it mean that the leadership team perceives the ability of women or just increases the number of women according to their plan in the strategy? It still takes time to eradicate the gender mindset that women are the followers.

Table 1: Staff recruitment for Agriculture and Forestry Sector from 2008-2010

Year	Total	Sex-disaggregated 2008-2009		Total	Sex-disaggregated 2009-2010	
		F	M		F	M
Ministry, Institutes	97	47	50	93	36	57
Agriculture and Forestry Office of Vientiane Capital	55	17	38	84	26	58
District Agriculture and Forestry Offices	103	34	69	500	125	375
Total	225	98	127	687	187	500

Source: Strategy for Advancement of Women of Agriculture and Forestry Sector 2011-2015

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter will use the successes and challenges encountered by DAW to give some recommendations for that organization. One conclusion that comes out in this research is that the CIPP model is the important tool for this research to explore the successes and challenges of the gender mainstreaming and the inclusion of persons with disability for the DAW. The Context of CIPP model describes how the participants perceived the definition of gender equality, and the results showed that participants viewed gender equality as the ability of women and men to access resources and rights equally. Although they identified gender equality as multifaceted, in accordance with Physical, Intelligence, Family, Workplace, and Agency, it is interesting that all participants did not discuss about persons with disability unless they were directly asked. In addition, “women talk to women” is another challenge because men thought that gender topics are directly related only to women. That is why whenever gender training was conducted, women always outnumbered men. However, it’s not only about the ability of women and men to get the same opportunity in all fields, but it’s also about how men react and treat women in reality. Women still have a hard time gaining equal rights and opportunities compared to men because old traditional practices still exist. For example, the idea that women have to work at home and should be the followers. Furthermore, Lao women’s idealized personalities also create challenges for them to be brave and willing to share their perspectives in both the family and the workplace. Nevertheless, if gender equality is achieved, respondents agreed there would be positive impact to the development of every organization, especially to women. The CIPP model also shows what resources are available and what needs to be developed in order to promote gender

equality, especially the inclusion of persons with disability. Human resources and financial resources are frequently mentioned as needed by not only DAW, but also other divisions. Insufficient resources seriously affects the process of conducting gender mainstreaming activity. The process component explores how the gender training promotes gender equality. During the training the gender mainstreaming strategy, family law, and many more domains are distributed to participants. One significant finding of this research is that even though women are still outnumbered by men in all fields, especially in Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the numbers of female staff are constantly increasing. In other words, DAW has achieved the promotion of gender equality, as shown in the recruitment output of the ministry. That is to say women are widely accepted as having ability to take part at work and be able to make some major decision at the workplace.

The weaknesses in gender mainstreaming implementation identified by participants highlight significant challenges that DAW should be aware of in order to achieve its mission. In order to overcome these challenges, I would recommend DAW to do as follows:

- **Promote inclusive approach:** It is crucial that the DAW should suggest at the Ministry level to consider including persons with disability in gender mainstreaming strategic plans. It is understandable that strategies address both genders in general, but it should mention persons with disability in particular because that will show that the organization acknowledges the participation of persons with disability in the agricultural sector.
- **Encourage men's participation:** It would be more effective if the guidelines for gender mainstreaming address the need for more men to attend gender training. Most of the time 90% of the attendees is female. If one wants to

achieve gender equality, it requires mutual understanding on gender issues.

Men and women need to work together in order to achieve the gender goal.

- **Recruit more and more appropriate staff:** Increase the number of human resources working in the DAW. Right now DAW only consists of 6 staff, and each one has a different responsibility in the unit. That makes it impossible for them to be able to provide enough gender training. In addition, not all of them have a gender background. Therefore, it is important to put the right person in the right job when the organization recruits new staff in the future.
- **Higher level of funding:** More financial support is needed to organize the training and evaluation. Every respondents claimed that there was too little budget to conduct each training and evaluation. Because the budget is allocated to each program by the ministry level, it is recommended that each department or division should have their own gender budget so that they can be accountable for their own programs and can monitor the gender activity by themselves.
- **Improve communication internally and internationally:** it is important to have good communication among internal organizations as well as external organizations because experience and lessons learned will be shared to improve the implementation of gender mainstreaming programs. In addition, since Lao staff have little expertise on gender equality, it is crucial to have effective communication with international organizations or other countries to learn and exchange information to promote gender equality, and information pertaining to Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Platform, and Millennium Development Goals.

- **Change women's perspectives:** Some participants recommended that women themselves have to be more self-aware and know how to use their own rights to improve their capabilities in the society. Taking this recommendation into account, women should be encouraged to speak for their own needs. In order to be able to do so, women need to see the world, get out of their house and break some unnecessary traditional rules.

Those recommendations are important for the improvement of DAW in order to succeed in promoting gender equality and the inclusion of persons with disability. For future research, I would recommend researchers to focus on inclusion approach to include women with disability in the agricultural sectors. As my findings have explored, the topic of gender and disability, women in particular, do not appear in the gender mainstreaming strategies at both ministerial level and national level. Therefore, it is important to raise awareness of the rights of persons with disability in Laos by studying how to include persons with disability in the gender strategies.



## **APPENDIX**

### **ABBREVIATIONS**

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women
CIPP	Context, Input, Process, Product
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DAW	Division for the Advancement of Women
DAFO	District Agricultural and Forestry Office
GRID	Gender Resource Information and Development Project
HI	Handicap International
INGO	International Nongovernmental Organization
LAD	Lao Association of the Deaf
LDU	Lao Deaf Unit
LDPA	Lao Disabled People's Association
LDWDC	Lao Disabled Women's Development Centre
LNCAW	Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women
LWU	Lao Women's Union
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
MOH	Ministry of Health
NCMR	National Center for Medical Readiness
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NGPES	National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy
PAFO	Provincial Agricultural and Forestry Office
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance

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